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OWNER OF BUS TRANSPORTATION COMPANY CONVICTED OF GRAND THEFT

Steven Martin, owner of Atlas Transportation Services and American Bus Charters, was convicted on his no contest plea today of defrauding out-of-state travel agencies of money paid for bus transportation services. Atlas Transportation Services and American Bus Charters advertised to travel agencies throughout the country offering bus transportation, but failed to provide the services. According to some victim travel agents, tourists were often left stranded. The case came to the City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit through complaints by travel agencies and the American Society of Travel Agents.

Martin informed the court that he does not believe the companies can be managed in a lawful manner. Therefore, the court ordered Atlas Transportation Services and American Bus Charters to cease all operations no later than January 25, 1998.

Martin has paid over \$6,800 of \$7,642 in court-ordered restitution to victims throughout the United States. He was also ordered to serve three years probation, pay fines and other restitution of \$1,200, and provide \$5,000 in transportation services to several non-profit organizations through an unrelated, lawful business enterprise he currently operates.

City Attorney Casey Gwinn said: "Consumers and businesses in other parts of the country may take comfort in knowing that my office will -- to the extent we are able -- investigate and, if warranted, prosecute individuals in San Diego who commit crimes against them."

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